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Letter dated 29 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of an important message to the nation delivered on Tuesday, 26 August 2003, by Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, following the simultaneous arrest in Côte d'Ivoire and France of persons involved in a plot to destabilize the Government of Côte d'Ivoire (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this message issued as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Philippe **Djangone-Bi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 29 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Message to the nation
H.E. Mr. Laurent Gbagbo
President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

26 August 2003

Fellow citizens,

You undoubtedly recall my statement of 7 February 2003. Noting the bitter reactions towards the Marcoussis Agreement, when I returned from Paris after the Kléber meeting, I appealed to you for calm and patience by inviting you to try this "medicine", for lack of a better alternative.

In this spirit, we firmly committed ourselves to the path of peace and national reconciliation. I must recall, however, that I considered it important to conduct this process in strict keeping with both the Constitution, the keystone of our institutions, and the commitments undertaken by the political parties and the rebel movements.

In this respect, I must stress the share of sacrifices that I myself agreed to bear by immediately dismissing the serving Prime Minister and his Government, with whom, it bears repeating, I found no fault.

In their place, I appointed a consensus Prime Minister to enable the establishment of a new Government of "national reconciliation".

Moreover, again for the sake of peace, I issued a decree, in implementation of the Marcoussis compromise, to delegate extensive powers to the new Prime Minister.

Furthermore, I accepted in this Government the presence of ministers from the rebel movements (the Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI), the Mouvement populaire du Grand Ouest (MPIGO) and the Mouvement pour la justice et la paix (MJP)) on an equal footing with all the legal political forces of Côte d'Ivoire.

In addition, contrary to my professed faith in ensuring strict respect for the separation of powers, I had to appeal to the Parliament for support of the amnesty law passed on 6 August 2003.

To enforce that law, which I immediately promulgated on 8 August, I instructed the interim Minister of Defence to issue an order immediately for the reintegration of all soldiers who are beneficiaries of that law.

Like all Ivorians, I was therefore looking forward to other advances in the national reconciliation process and a gradual return to peace.

We were still holding such hopes when the Ivorian intelligence services, working closely with the French intelligence services, informed me of a terrorist plot to overthrow our institutions.

In particular, that plot involved attempts to assassinate senior members of my staff and myself.

I can assure you that since the end of last week, cooperation between the Ivorian and French services has led to the simultaneous arrest in Côte I'voire and France of persons involved in that terrorist undertaking.

I should like to express sincere thanks to the French authorities at the highest level whose invaluable assistance has helped to thwart this nth attempt to destabilize our country, Côte d'Ivoire.

I recall that since the start of the events of 19 September 2002, France has constantly been at our side by deploying more than 4,000 of its soldiers to support the peace efforts of the international community in Côte d'Ivoire.

How can we fail therefore to condemn the cowardly assassination by rebels of two French servicemen yesterday as they were carrying out their mission on Lake Kossou? I honour of course the memory of those victims and offer the condolences of Côte d'Ivoire to France and the bereaved families.

Côte d'Ivoire cannot remain in this cycle of repeated threats of coups d'état indefinitely.

That is why I hope that the investigations into this other destabilization plot will be carried out with diligence, rigour and seriousness so that the masterminds and their accomplices will be uncovered, whoever and wherever they may be.

Incidentally, the events of these past few days prove, if proof were needed, that the obstacles to the peace and national reconciliation process were not, and will never be, placed by me. Further, however serious the situation may be, I remain convinced that, no matter what, we must stay the path to peace to which we are sincerely committed.

I urge you therefore to put your trust in justice and to believe in the future of our country.

May God bless Côte d'Ivoire.

Attachment

List of persons arrested today in France

1. Four persons (mercenaries) arrested at Roissy, Charles de Gaulle:

   Jurgen Harry Pohl

   Paul Lionelli (Corsican)

   Jean-Luc Muliakaaka (Kanak)

   Maurice Nanou Kakou (Ivorian)

2. Five persons arrested at hotel Méridien, Montparnasse, Paris:

   Chief Sergeant Ibrahim Coulibaly, alias I.B. (service passport of Burkina Faso)

   Me Mamadou Diomande (Ivorian), lawyer in Saint-Nazaire

   Hassan Farouk Fakhr (Lebanese), financier of the operation

   Vakaramoko Diaby (Ivorian)

   Kouakou Gnamien (Ivorian)

3. One person arrested at Orange/southern France:

   Véa Soakimi (mercenary)